



Protect the natural environment tops list in GTA West Hwy discussion

Melanie Hennessey

Independent Free Press | 21 hours ago

As the study of land needed for a proposed major highway that would cut through southern Halton Hills forges ahead, local residents are calling on the powers that be to choose a route that best protects the natural environment and farmland.

This sentiment was shared by many who attended a community workshop on June 22 regarding the potential four to six-lane thoroughfare, which would stretch from Hwy. 400 and through Halton Hills to the Hwy. 401/407 junction.

About 100 residents turned out for the session at Mold-Masters SportsPlex, where they had an opportunity to hear from the team heading up a study on the highway, commonly referred to as the GTA West Transportation Corridor.

The team presented the methodology it has come up with to evaluate the short list of route alternatives for the highway, taking into account four key factors: the natural environment, land use, cultural environment and transportation needs.

"Each route is being assessed based on what it impacts in each category," explained Jay Goldberg, project co-ordinator with MMM Group.

Opinions varied during the small group discussions, but many residents indicated that protecting the natural environment tops their list.

"We live in the country, so the natural environment is very important to us," said Ruth Jay.

For Georgetown residents like Jason Brindley, this also includes preserving farmland and the country atmosphere of Halton Hills.

"A lot of people moved here for a quieter pace of life, and Georgetown is the last place around that's reasonably quiet," he said, noting he moved to Halton Hills from Brampton to get away from the hustle and bustle.

In addition to the study comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the potential routes (also known as the reasoned argument method), it's taking the perspectives of local stakeholders into account in a unique way. Residents at the meeting were asked to use the arithmetic method, or assign a numerical weighted value to the four factors mentioned above indicating how important each is to them, with the four numbers adding up to 100. This exercise is being used to test the results of the reasoned argument method.

While the study team worked hard to keep the discussions at the meeting on topic, conversation throughout the evening also turned to whether or not residents want to see the major highway built in the first place.

"I don't think anybody in Georgetown really wants this," said Brindley. "I think they should just improve the existing roads."

Goldberg explained that the first stage of the GTA West Corridor study did examine whether or not the new highway is in fact needed.

"That determined in this area, based on future projections of employment and population, we still need a new highway," he said.

The highway is expected to have a minimum of four to six lanes and a separate adjacent transit way. It will be needed to handle the expected 1.5 million additional vehicle trips each day in the GTA West Study area by 2031. It's not known when the highway would be built as currently there's no government commitment to fund its construction.

The Ministry of Transportation is considering two potential routes through southeast Halton Hills for the proposed highway. One option crosses Winston Churchill Blvd. (WCB), south of Bovaird Dr. and then runs between Ninth and Tenth Lines to join up with highways 401/407. Potential interchanges being considered are at Five Sideroad and Tenth Line.

The second would cross Winston Churchill Blvd., south of Five Sideroad, then across Tenth and Ninth Lines to Hwy. 401. Interchanges are being considered at WCB. and Embleton Rd.

Maps can be viewed at www.gta-west.com, along with comment sheets for those who couldn't attend the meeting. The project team is accepting public input until July 31 and will be conducting field investigations throughout the summer to inventory the natural features. A preferred route will be presented to residents in the fall.

